

Calling the Nations to Account

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[0 : 0 0] so I wonder what do we know about Amos anything migrant worker love that very contemporary Alistair what else any images when we say Amos a plumb line good that's probably the most famous anything else a shepherd look at that today well it's really good you all turned up because we're going to learn many wonderful things so if the minor prophets are like glamping in sky Amos is a bit like Cote Bridge it's a town Amos is like a town but it's not a very nice town kind of like Cote Bridge if you're from Cote Bridge we can talk afterwards and you can hit me it's a bit dark it's very rough it's quite dangerous but if you've ever been to Cote Bridge there's one building in Cote Bridge that stands out and it's called the time capsule and it's the most fun swimming pool you've ever been to in your life and so as we go through Amos we're going to see lots of dark and rough things but there's going to be when we finish there's going to be one amazing gleaming building that we'll forever remember the problem is we have to wait till chapter 9 before we get introduced to it so I'm going to act like a tour guide we're going to stroll through the town of Amos and we're going to learn some wonderful things last thing is introduction there's a combination code to Amos and the combination code is 8351 perhaps we could all say that together 8351 and the reason that unlocks Amos is because it's the what happens in the book so there's 8 oracles of judgment 3 sermons of rebuke 5 visions of judgment and 1 oracle of salvation that's the time capsule at the end 8 oracles of judgment 3 sermons of rebuke 5 visions of judgment 1 oracle of salvation 8351 ok should have found Amos by now it's not one that we go to often so I thought I'd give you a little bit of time to save your embarrassment and so Amos chapter 1 verse 1 says this the words of Amos one of the shepherds of Tekoa the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel he said the Lord roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem the pastures of the shepherds dry up and the top of Carmel withers so we're introduced to this guy Amos and Amos is a shepherd he looks after sheep in 714 of the book we learn that he also looks after sycamore fig trees so he's kind of like a mixed farmer a bit of sheep a bit of trees and actually that frames this book really well because so much of Amos uses images of farming there's so many pictures in it that for a farmer these would be day in day out kind of things and we're going to see those as we go through and I love that because God is delivering his truth to Israel through Amos who is a farmer and it is God's truth through personality

Amos knows agriculture and the message that comes is God's message but through his personality using a lot of this agriculture language and Amos is a southerner he's from this place called Tekoa which is down in the southeast near Bethlehem and so he's in the south that if you remember in 2 Kings 12 the kingdom splits Rehoboam becomes the king of Judah Solomon's son but the ten northern tribes go off with Jeroboam son of Nebat and so Amos is a southerner from the south from Tekoa near Bethlehem but he's delivering his message primarily to Israel and therefore as Alistair said he is a migrant worker he is in a very real sense a missionary who's gone to deliver God's message in a foreign country Amos is written we think and it's quite easy to date because we've got very clear instructions the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam was son of Jehoash and so we can date it about 760 AD

Amos is very rarely a contemporary of Isaiah and this time of the time this message is delivered to Israel life in Israel is great they are having a good time they are flourishing they are prospering they win a victory against the Edomites where 10,000 Edomites are killed in the Valley of Salt they've won some skirmishes against Judah who they don't get on with anymore so they have some pitched battles and Israel comes out on top they even have a foray into Jerusalem and manage to steal the temple articles the boundaries of Israel are expanded and so life in Israel is good they are really flourishing they are really on it all is seemingly well with the world and it's in this backdrop that a lone prophet from the southern kingdom rides into town and starts to speak look at verse 2 what he says the Lord roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem that's a tough message to bring to the northern kingdom because they've rejected Jerusalem as the nation's capital as Jeroboam sets up golden calves in Dan and Bethel in some attempt at statecraft to diminish Jerusalem's influence on the nation and look what it says that the Lord roars from Zion the language of a lion and when he roars look what happens the pastures dry up the top of caramel withers if you're a shepherd the absolute worst thing that could ever happen to you is that the pastures dry up and the foliage on top of caramel withers that'd be the worst thing your job basically as a shepherd is to keep your sheep healthy safe and plump and to keep them plump you need good pasture but the Lord roars from Zion and we learn don't we that God through Amos who is declaring the roars of God and the thunders of God he is ruling and acting in history he's decided that it's time to intervene in Israel's life and so we have a God who rules and acts in history and a God who speaks and communicates he doesn't sit at the corner of the universe in a deck chair drinking a pina colada and let people get on with it he's intimately interested in the affairs of the world he created and owns and governs sovereignly and notice that God roars this is not

God coming to put his hand put his arm around Israel's shoulder and say well done you're being very good and you're flourishing as a result God is roaring this God is to be feared as we read through Amos we're going to see they're incredibly complacent and so God roars to shake them and wake them out of their complacency and God roaring is a good thing God roaring is a good thing that actually when a lion roars it's warning you says this is my territory don't come any closer it's far more dangerous when a lion is prowling than it's when the lion prowls that it sneaks up so the fact that God is roaring is a real warning to Israel because God is kind and he's trying to influence their lives and though this book is majoritively dark it's good that they know these things that he's giving them a chance to change a chance to move the worst thing that could happen is if

God stopped speaking if God gave up communicating with his people and just left them to their own devices sadly we're going to see that that does actually happen in Amos in Amos chapter 8 verse 8 God says there's going to be a famine of the word of God as he stops speaking but right now in Amos 1 he is roaring at his people and so we have a farming prophet who speaks on behalf of the sovereign lord who is roaring let me read verse 3 onwards this is what the lord says for three sins of Damascus even for four I will not relent because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth I will send fire on the house of Hazael that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad I will break down the gate of Damascus I will destroy the king who is in the valley of Avon and the one who holds the scepter in Beth

[10:35] Eden the people of Aram will go into exile to Ker then drop down with me to verse 13 this is what the lord says for three sins of Ammon even for four I will not relent because he ripped open the pregnant woman in Gilead in order to extend his borders I will set fire to the walls of Rabbah that will consume her fortresses amid war cries on the day of battle amid violent winds on a stormy day her king will go into exile he and his officials together says the lord look with me at verse 4 of chapter 2 this is what the lord says for three sins of Judah even for four I will not relent because they have rejected the law of the lord and have not kept his decrees because they have been led astray by false gods the gods their ancestors followed I will send fire on Jerusalem on Judah that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem this is the best sermon that the people of Israel have ever heard they are loving this as he speaks they are going amos amos amos guy at the back two hands in the air preach it brother let us have it amen there is a few Scottish people in so there is just that really edifying mmm and these seven oracles follow a really standard form he says thus says the lord this is god speaking this is amos as god's prophetic mouthpiece and then we get the standard form for three sins even for four for three sins even for four this is a hebrew idiom talking about completeness that god says you have completely sinned your sin is now full so i tried this this week as i did the grocery shopping in our house aileen said did you get everything i said for three groceries even for four and she didn't get it and thought i was even weirder than normal and so god says i've looked and i've seen that their sins are full they're full of sin and all these places all seven of these nations are the surrounding districts the enemies of israel this is the best news they've ever hurt all these people that have inflicted damage on them over the years who have caused them pain and anguish who have had pitch battles against them god says i'm going to judge them because their sin is full and look what he says i will not relent every time for three sins of god's even for four i will not relent for three sins of tyer even for four i will not relent there's going to be no ninevite reprieve for these nations and then he brings charges against them and i'm sure as we read some of these charges are abominable the damascus has massacred the people of gilead he's they've massacred them like a combine harvester going through them and just cutting them down the people of gaza have done wholesale slave trading they've taken captives and passed them on to edom in some abominable way the people of tyre have become human traffickers even selling their own brothers by breaking treaties that were made edom disproportionate anger slaughter of women and slaying people people that

back in the day were related to them the edomites being esau's descendants the red ones if you like and then these two tribes amon and moab amon and moab the incestuous offspring of lots two daughters from genesis 19 and amon and moab who have graphic horrendously graphic butchering pregnant women and cutting out their unborn children in the name of expansion and moab who have desecrated a royal corpse which is an abomination in the ancient world and then see verse four even judah even judah's come under the radar of god for their idolatry their gross idolatry because they have rejected the law of the lord and have not kept his decrees because they have led astray they have been led astray by false gods the gods their ancestors followed just catalogs the sins of these nations and israel is loving amos right now he can't get enough of it he's going to get a cover piece on israel magazine he's got 10,000 twitter followers overnight he's now got a limo and an entourage he's been given keys to the city best guy they've ever heard preach he says god's seen it all he's heard it all he knows it all and he's going to judge it all and this god who sees this so comforting that he sees our world as well as we prayed so many people picking out that the world is very chaotic and god sees it all and he's no less inclined to judge it he's not stopped keeping score and taking account of the sins of the world and that's so good because nothing's happening under god's radar nothing do you know we see the news all the time we wake up to sky news in my house every day and it's horrendous and we get numb to it numb to injustice another school shooting this week you think well i've seen lots of those before and we start to become very hard to it and yet this passage comforts us because it says our god sees and knows and if this temporal judgment is certain then eternal judgment where god will call to account all sin all wickedness all bloodshed all needless violence all oppression then we can have real comfort that our god knows and so when we pray god this world is in chaos we can thank him that it won't go unaccounted for israel's loving amos right now he's had 10 000 youtube views by the time we get to chapter 2 verse 5 but chapter 2 verse 6 everything changes so we had a farming prophet we then had a fantastic prophecy that israel was loving now we're going to have a frightening prophecy chapter 2 6 to 16 and so the auditorium is full we love amos t-shirts are emblazoned on everyone's chest there's been a fervent prayer meeting in the auditorium for amos's next speech and as he takes the stage there's hushed silence and this is what amos says this is what the lord says for three sins of israel even for

four i will not relent they sell the innocent for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals they trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name they lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge in the house of their god they drink wine taken as fines yet i destroyed the amorites before them though they were tall as the cedars and strong as the oaks i destroyed their fruit above and their root below i brought you up out of egypt and led you for 40 years in the wilderness to give you the land of the amorites i also raised up prophets from among your children and nazirites from among your youths is this not true people of israel declares the lord but you made the nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy now then i will crush you as a cart crushes when loaded with grain the swift will not escape the strong will not muster their strength and the warrior will not save his life the archer will not stand his ground the fleet footed soldier will not get away and the horseman will not save his life even the bravest warriors will flee naked on that day and as amos delivers this there's gasps there's faints there's crying because it seems that god has left the vilest offender till last the other seven were just the prawn cocktail before the steak and ale pie as amos delivers the thunderbolt of god right in the midst of a people who have a catalogue of crimes before them it is a sweeping accusation there's perverted justice they sell innocence for silver and they're needy for a pair of sandals human life is nothing and those that are at the bottom of the food chain are picked off by those at the top they trample on the poor they deny justice to the oppressed this is a civilization that has disintegrated with perverted justice not only that but there is sexual immorality the end of verse seven father and son use the same girl and so profane my name this idea that sex is just a thing and the girls are just to be used and so even father and son are indulging with the same person they disadvantage the unfortunate they lie down besides every altar on garments taken in pledge it says in the law of Moses that you can take a garment as a pledge if you're in debt but you must give it back by nightfall so people aren't cold when they're asleep it's a really good law that those who are right at the bottom are not in this downward spiral and look what they do the people that have taken the garment on pledge keep it for the night and they use it as a mattress but not just in their own home beside the altar of God and they take fines that are supposed to be used for the restitution of people who have got it wrong but what do they do they go to threshers and odd bins and they buy a lot of wine and they drink it in the house of their gods and it's

perpetuated by the most powerful people the people at the top abusing the little ones at the bottom and the dogs with the biggest teeth are eating the biggest dinners they're violating God's holiness they're saying his law it's nothing to us we can just trample over it and they perform sacrilege because even in God's special symbolic places they're indulging in all kinds of sin so it seems quite apart from the other seven nations Israel is being judged and they're being judged especially on account of the amount of revelation that they have received from God they should know better it seems that the pagan nations are being called up for gross injustice and offences against human morality but here it's very specific because they know God's law and they're trampling over it anyway and then in verses 9 and 10

God reminds them that he's been so good to them I destroyed the Amorites before you I gave you this land I led you through the wilderness and I did it in such a way that you wouldn't be polluted by the surrounding nations and now you're acting just like them and just as I judge them I will judge you they've forgotten that the only reason that they're a nation with a land is because their God was so kind to them then verses 11 and 12 God again raised people up to speak to them and to lead them but the people rejected them he gave them prophets to speak God's word to them and Nazirites these incredible people we have in the Old Testament these real hairy men who are like the X-Men of the Old Testament who do incredible things and bring about reforms in the nation and the prophets are not allowed to speak and the

[24 : 51] Nazarites if you're a Nazarite there's three big no-nos you can't have a haircut you can't touch a dead body and you can't drink alcohol and what do they do verse 12 you made the Nazarites drink wine it's going to trample all over God's goodness and God's grace they forced them to break vows and forced the prophets not to speak a total disregard for God doing really well but they've come incredibly complacent and their hearts have become cold towards God and injustice reigns and so Jesus says the two greatest commandments are to love the Lord your God with all your heart soul mind and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself and as they've stopped loving the Lord their God with all their heart soul mind and strength and become incredibly tokenistic is it any wonder that they're the ones trampling on their brothers and sisters as a result he says two things you're very guilty of hypocritical worship you say you're worshipping me but you're not it's outward appearance but the inward reality is miles away and as a result there's social injustice

God set up his law there would be equity there would be community there would be people looking after each other but that's not here in Israel in 760 BC there's just social injustice everywhere and God says I've seen it all and I'm going to judge it all because it matters to me it really matters so verses 13 to 16 are brutal now then I will crush you as a cart crushes when loaded with grain the juggernaut of the ancient world running over them and there's no escape for anyone doesn't matter if you're the quickest the strongest the bravest doesn't matter if you're great at fighting or the quickest on the draw with the arrows you will not escape this so total is God's judgment this book is a bit like

Cote Bridge there are some dark streets and this is the first of them and so what are we to do with this well I think there's some real challenges isn't there a real challenge that are we engaging in hypocritical worship or are we really loving God as we should are we listening to God's word and obeying it or are we just keeping up appearances is Jesus the Lord and saviour of our lives or is that just a tokenistic gesture because we've come this far in our Christian faith and we can't turn back now are our insides the same as our outsides or is this just a hypocritical facade mask that we put on on a Sunday because God sees not just that we're here but how we're hearing not just that we're singing but where our voices are coming from not just where we are physically but where we are spiritually before him and this is a real warning that we can't pull the world over his eyes and secondly that he's really passionate about social justice he is that he really cares and

I wonder how that affects our lives the trainers we wear the food that we eat our attitude to the people that we pass on the street whether this gospel as we looked at this morning is really working its way into every area of our lives because God says I really care and he has a special heart for those that are poor and marginalized and he trusts us as his people to specially go out of the way for them and so he says I've looked and you're going to be crushed and there be no escape and resistance is futile and so 800 years around after Amos said this another prophet born in the region of Bethlehem turned up to see a lot of God's people gathering together this time right in the middle of Jerusalem in a temple and he was appalled by what he saw there were money changers ripping off poor people they were even selling doves now the reason you could bring doves as a sacrifice was so even if you had nothing you could bring something to offer to

God but yet these doves are being sold at extortionate prices and not only that but the marketplaces in the court of the Gentiles where even if you weren't a Jew you could come and worship God and so they're getting pushed out as well and the same God who judges these people goes mad and he turns over the tables and it all goes everywhere and says get these out of here this temple is to be a house of prayer for all nations then he says destroy this temple in three days build it again and so with this we finish the in and of ourselves we don't worship rightly and we do oppress and look after number one but Jesus says to worship me rightly is through my death and resurrection and it's as we do that and he moves into our lives and changes us that we start to worship God with all our heart soul mind and strength and he gives us the ability to love our neighbor as ourselves and so our tokenism is gone we start to live counter cultural lives we stop looking out for ourselves but we start living and looking after others the reason is because

[31 : 20] Jesus was crushed crushed with a cartload of my sin and as he's crushed in my place because he didn't escape I can't escape and I'm free to worship God rightly and so hypocritical as I am unholy as I am I'm able to come before God without fear of judgment because Jesus was judged in my place God still roars in judgment but through the cross those ferocious growls are dissipated to whispers of grace for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich let me pray father god we know that nothing in all creation is hidden from your eyes father that right now you see the depths of our hearts you see what's for real and what's for show you see what's for

Sundays and what's for keeps and so lord we invite you into our lives to continue your work of changing us changing us so that we might worship you rightly and live for you fully father thank you so much for Amos your servant who even amidst a hostile crowd was prepared to declare your truth and so lord would you be changing us this week that we might love you with everything and love our neighbours as ourselves and that that might make a real difference in your hand and we might be able to declare your truth even when it's tough and hostile father bless us and thank you for this time in Jesus name Amen